

# EMBASSY UPDATES

NEWSLETTER FOR U.S. CITIZENS IN KOSOVO



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## Spotlight on MCC Resident Country Mission

### About MCC

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is a small independent U.S. foreign assistance agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty. Created by the U.S. Congress in 2004 with strong bipartisan support, MCC provides time-limited grants promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and strengthening institutions. The starting point for MCC's approach is country ownership, and countries selected for an MCC program take the lead in identifying their priorities for achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

### Kosovo Country Mission

The MCC Mission in Kosovo was established in September 2017. The team of three employees based at the US Embassy provides oversight and support for the development and implementation of MCC's programs in Kosovo, supported by a team of about 20 technical experts based in D.C.

### Threshold Program (2017 – 2022)

MCC's Threshold Program is addressing two key constraints to Kosovo's economic growth: an unreliable supply of electricity; and real and perceived weakness in rule of law, government accountability, and transparency. MCC's investments are designed to strengthen the power sector by fostering a market-driven approach to lowering energy costs



### 20 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR KOSOVO WOMEN STUDYING ENERGY.

MFC will in 2019 launch an exciting program of scholarships for Kosovo women, sponsoring 2-year degrees in international colleges related to energy sector.

millenniumkosovo.org

Photo courtesy of MCC.

**The U.S. Embassy Consular Section is open for appointments two days a week until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, we are not currently using our online appointment system. Instead, to make an appointment, email [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov). Should you have an emergency, please email [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov) or call +383 338 59 59 30 00.**

United States Embassy Pristina, Kosovo American Citizen Services



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for households and businesses, encouraging energy efficiency, and developing new sources of electricity generation. The program also supports the Government of Kosovo's efforts to improve decision-making and accountability by increasing the accessibility and use of judicial, environmental, and labor force data. The program is being implemented by Millennium Foundation Kosovo, the Accountable Entity established by the Government of Kosovo to implement the program.



Photo courtesy of MCC.

Government of Kosovo has established a team of experts to develop with MCC a program focused on supporting a stable and affordable energy sector that promotes private sector growth and investment and a just energy transition. Projects will cover three areas, including electricity grid strengthening, energy storage for system balancing, and supporting activities in workforce development and encouraging women's participation in the labor market.

#### *Proposed Compact Program (To be signed FY22)*

In 2018, the MCC Board of Directors selected Kosovo as eligible to develop a larger-scale Compact Program, and the



Photo courtesy of MCC.

## Return To The US On Your Expired Passport

**As of May, 21, 2021, U.S. citizens can use their expired U.S. passports to return to the United States through December 31, 2021. This applies only to U.S. citizens whose passports expired on or after January 1, 2020.**

**Expired passports cannot be used to travel from the United States to an international destination or to travel to a foreign country for any length of stay longer than an airport connection in route to the United States or United States territory.**

**U.S. citizen travelers can use an expired passport if they are currently abroad seeking to return to the United States, they are flying directly to the United States, a United States territory, or have only short-term transit through a foreign country. Moreover, the expired passport must be undamaged and in their possession and was originally valid for 10 years. Or, if they were 15 years of age or under when the passport was issued, their expired passport was originally valid for 5 years.**

**Remember to renew your passport early at the U.S. Embassy to avoid this problem! Email us at [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov) for an appointment. Passports are ready approximately three weeks after your appointment in most cases.**

## Residency Permit Process In Kosovo

The first step is to determine if you need a residency card. Diplomats and certain contractors do not, but their families might. If your family is sponsored by your employer for special status, you do not need a residency card. If not sponsored, your family must go through the residency process. People in Kosovo on diplomatic missions without family sponsorship cannot use family unification as a reason to get a residency card for their families. Everyone resident in Kosovo for 90 days or more must get a residency card.

What are the benefits of residency for you? With residency, you can get a COVID vaccination at the clinic. You get all the benefits of Kosovo citizenship except the ability to vote or hold office. You will need to reregister for residency annually.

If you are planning to be a resident in Kosovo, before leaving the U.S. please obtain your police report before leaving the U.S.. This is the most time consuming part of the process to get when you are in Kosovo. The documents you need are:

1. A valid passport.
2. A work contract from anywhere. The company needs to be registered locally in Kosovo. If it is not, you may register as an individual business and obtain a fiscal number from the Ministry of Trade and Industry.
3. A minimum income of 5,000 euro per individual or 6,000 euro per family per year.
4. A bank account. The account can be anywhere worldwide. Kosovo bank accounts may not be opened without a residency permit and it is at the discretion of the individual banks to open an account for you without a residency permit OR
5. In lieu of a bank account, a contract of employment. This contract will be continuously verified and checked by the tax administration. The contract has to be in line with the local Kosovo labor law, and does not need to be notarized.
6. A verifiable local address in Kosovo. An alternative for this is for a lawyer or notary to certify the address is real. If you change addresses, you must report it to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by presenting your new contract withing 15 days window.
7. Valid local or international health insurance.
8. Qualifications for employment – these can include your degree or credentials, professional certificates, or licenses. They must be apostilled as a true copy or be the original. For those self-employed as business owners, this is waived.
9. A criminal report from the place you last resided. For the U.S., this would be a police report from the FBI or the local agency where you last lived in the US.
10. [An application for residency permit.](#)



Once you have gathered everything together, make an appointment with the Foreigners division of the MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs). You can call for it at +383 (0)38 213 007. Bring everything to your appointment. You will meet with someone, answer questions, go over the documentation, be fingerprinted, and be sent away. It will take a week or two before you will be called, if approved, for another appointment where you will receive your residency card.



## New Consul Joins Embassy Pristina

We welcomed our new Consular Chief, Ian Hayward, in August. He's had a very busy start, helping with Afghan refugees now housed here in Kosovo and keeping up with consular operations. Because of that, he's been unable to see much of Kosovo yet. Ian does have hobbies, but his twin children and wife keep him very busy. They plan on traveling when things slow down a bit, and hope Ian can go with them.



Like so many Americans, Ian does not speak with a traditional "American" accent. His Albanian does not have one, either. Rather, Ian was born in the United Kingdom and emigrated in his early teens, so don't be surprised when the American consul speaks with an English accent.

Ian and his family's last post was Quito, Ecuador, where the consular team successfully evacuated 6,000 U.S. citizens at the beginning of the COVID pandemic. You can read about some of Ian's work there in the [Washington Post](#) or listen to the "[Get Me Out of Here!](#)" podcast. After learning some Albanian at the Foreign Service Institute, the whole family landed here and we are very happy to have them!

Where do you think Ian and his family should visit in Kosovo? Please tell us! You can email [PristinaACS@state.gov](mailto:PristinaACS@state.gov) with your ideas.

## American Business - [Restaurant Lorian](#)

Bekim Lezi came back to Kosovo to be with his family after having been in the United States for fifteen years. During those fifteen years, despite being an engineer by training, Bekim became a restaurateur. So when he returned to Kosovo, his in laws, via their corporation, opened Restaurant Lorian just off Rruga B for him to ply his trade.

Bekim has been happily surprised by the varied and good restaurant scene in Pristina. He attributes it to the large international community living here. It is always easier to open a new restaurant in an area that appreciates eating out.

Lorian specializes in Italian and Mediterranean cuisine with a healthy dollop of steak and seafood. It's got an upscale, subdued atmosphere and excellent staff. They adhere to the stricter food handling and storage rules of the United States, making it also



Photo courtesy of Lorian Restaurant.

one of the safest

The pandemic restrictions have been hard on the whole restaurant industry, but affected Lorian less than usual - because it is owned by CIMA Construction. This allowed the restaurant to pay its staff throughout the lockdowns and slow downs and curfews. Not a single member of the staff, who have all been there since the beginning, was laid off. Although the restaurant lost money, the corporation did not - and was able to make up the shortfall in overhead. Lorian, like many restaurants, does not have a large dedicated terrace. This meant that when they

were able to reopen for outdoor dining only, they still lost money.

Bekim says customers in Pristina are appreciative of good food and patient with the kitchen and wait staff, but he misses the effusive praise of Texans, who would tell his staff how great the food was. They built relationships with the restaurant. It is more difficult to do so here, but it does happen.

One of Bekim's secrets to running well. His employees don't quit. He long hours. He adheres to a 40 staff, listening to them, and environment and a better dining



Photo courtesy of Lorian Restaurant.

an excellent restaurant is treating his staff pays them well and they don't need to work hour work week. Communicating with his explaining his vision leads to a better work experience for all.

## Euro Traffic Sign Quiz

Some of these signs are seen around the Balkans and if you are traveling to Italy. How well can you do?

<https://blog.greenflag.com/2018/quiz-how-well-do-you-know-your-european-traffic-signs/>

## What Is Veterans' Day?

On the eleventh minute of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1919, World War I came to an end in a train car in France. Every year, the United States and several other countries honor those who have been in military service on this day. We give thanks to those, both living and dead, who risked their lives to keep us free. Poppies are associated with Veterans' Day (called Remembrance Day in the UK) because of the [poem by John McCrae](#).



## Avoiding Pickpockets On Holiday

Pickpockets, like many other professions, have had a hard pandemic. No one going outside meant no one to lift things off of. No tourists. No marks. A hard life when your life depends on theft. This means pickpockets are out to make up for their lost income. They are more dedicated, more desperate, and more abundant than ever. How do you avoid theft when you are out visiting the sights of another country? There are some things you can do.

Leave your most valuable possessions at home or, at least, in your room. Pickpockets can't take what isn't on you.

Don't show your wallet, your phone, your laptop, your tablet, your jewelry when out and about. Use these things as little as possible. Pickpockets watch people to see what's on the market that day. Electronics, jewelry, and money make you a target. Don't attract their eyes.

Invest in D-rings, otherwise known as carabiners. You can use these to keep zips and pockets shut. A carabiner makes a theft much harder by increasing the time it takes to open and lift things out.

Don't let yourself get trapped in a static situation. Stand on the edge of the crowd. Move around it. Pickpockets work in teams. If you're static and distractable, you're easily stolen from. Pickpockets will provide a distraction, a bottleneck, a way to draw you away from what you are carrying.

If you are going to carry expensive things around, bury them in the bottom of your backpack, purse, or other container. If it's not at the top, it's not easy to get to – for you or the pickpocket.

If you are a victim of a theft, report it to the police. They probably will not be able to get your valuables back, but it will help them know where to patrol more to look for thefts in progress. Unfortunately, the Embassy cannot do anything to help you in this kind of crime. We will listen; if you lose all your money, we will help you find funding from relatives. But that is all we can do.

A pickpocket team's perfect scenario is knowing exactly where your valuable is and that it is unconstrained by buttons, zippers, and so on. There is a means of escape for the one who lifts the item. And there is a way to detain the victim to ensure a better getaway.

I am writing this because my husband was a victim in Athens this summer. He had taken out his phone to text me in a metro car. He put it back in his tactical pants, in the pocket with Velcro by the knee. He did not feel the thief lift the phone. He did see an accomplice block him from getting out of the car as the doors open. And he (and the police) saw the thief scamper up the escalator and out of the scene. Catching the actual thief would not have returned the phone. It had been passed off to another accomplice as soon as stolen and put into a bag with a Faraday cage – eliminating any way of tracing it. Don't be like my husband.

The successful attempt was after at least five or six attempts at my purse and his backpack as we were out and about during the day. We didn't feel any of them, but zippers were pulled and pockets opened. Some lucky pickpocket got a package of travel tissues. Be aware as you enjoy your freedom to travel!

For other ways to avoid pickpockets, here's [an article](#) by Rick Steves.